

One of the most disturbing aspects of the LPMF (soon to be LPAM) battle is the “Haves” vs the “Have Nots” when it comes to the process.

Many of us in broadcasting today are looked down upon by the “community broadcasters” who seem to think that because we have attained a level of success using the system set forth by the FCC, are now somehow less of a community service outlet than THEY would be.

Those of us making a living in broadcasting are doing it by rules that are unfathomable to the LPMF community. We not only deal with voluminous FCC regulations, but many other state and local laws designed to keep us doing business properly. We MUST provide what the community wants or we have no one listening.

In this day we are challenged like never before. The FCC approved Satellite delivered radio as a national service to fill in white areas and provide ethnic and language broadcasts to citizens. But the FCC did not stick with this mandate. Instead they have allowed XM and SERIUS to directly compete with terrestrial broadcasters, first with programming, then with ground based mega-transmitters and finally with location based programming. The FCC then opened windows for LPFM stations and new FM translators. While it granted the LPFM's, it has made no moves on the thousands of FM translator applications still sitting out there.

As commercial broadcasters, should we desire a new frequency, we have to go through a rather long and expensive process. First we must find a place for a frequency and engineer it. Then we tell the FCC about it whereupon the new allocation goes into an auction. In these auctions we can expect to pay a fortune for a frequency, even if we are the ones who have developed the engineering to allow it.

The rallying cry of the LPFM (and LPAM) movement is that “the airways belong to the people of the United States”. Well this is true. But imagine the mess if everyone was allowed to enter no matter what! So the system is put in place to bring new people in. But the resource is finite and measures must be taken to limit access. Most of these “community” broadcasters want their place on the dial in metropolitan areas. They want the FCC to take away spectrum from current broadcasters to make room for them. But where does this end? How far back do you cut those of us who have followed the rules and made a deal with the FCC to use spectrum we now lease?

Remember that over 50% of all broadcasters are Small Market broadcasters. The big companies that everyone complains about (Clear Channel, Infinity etc) control a VERY small number of radio stations and most of them in large

markets. The rules the FCC makes to take care of problems in large markets have a way of very negatively affecting small market broadcasters. The proposed rules for ownership of LPAMs are once again discriminatory. A new comer can own 12 AM stations, but someone who now owns one FM is not allowed entry.

I hope as the FCC considers more rules and more allocation of the spectrum, it keeps in mind the mandates that are now in place concerning Commercial Broadcasters, and most importantly, Small Market Commercial Broadcasters.